

Chestnut Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113050
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	375438
Inspection dates	15–16 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Mike Burghart

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	28
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tracy-Anne Hornby
Headteacher	Tracy Hannon
Date of previous school inspection	19–20 May 2010
School address	Magnolia Avenue Exeter EX2 6DJ
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Age group	3–5
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. He observed seven lessons featuring the one class teacher in post and a variety of nursery workers. He spoke informally to parents and carers, held meetings with the executive headteacher, the head of teaching and learning, officers of the local authority and with members of the governing body. The inspector looked at school documentation and records of assessment made of children's performance, as well as observing aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- What is the quality and effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels?
- What is the quality of teaching and learning and children's achievements?
- How well is assessment used to make improvements to children's progress?

Information about the school

This nursery has places for 56 children, 28 in the morning and 28 in the afternoon. Presently, it is half full, but the number on roll will increase by 21 in January 2012. An average of 14 children stay to lunch, some go home immediately afterwards, but a small minority stay all day. The nursery is situated within an established children's centre but is run as a setting in its own right. At Easter 2011, it formed a federation with a local primary school and, following a variety of interim leadership arrangements, the headteacher of the primary school took over the executive headship of the nursery. A head of teaching and learning has since been appointed to oversee day-to-day running of the nursery. She also has responsibility for the Reception classes at the federated primary school.

The vast majority of children are of White British heritage and have English as their first language. A very few children are from minority ethnic groups. The most common of these are Polish and Lithuanian.

When the nursery was inspected in May 2010, it was deemed to be in need of special measures to bring about the required improvement. Inspectors have visited each term since then to report on progress.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. Significant improvements have been made to children's achievement through much-improved teaching, a now established stimulating curriculum, well tailored to children's needs, and robust leadership and management. The nursery takes good care of children and provides a satisfactory introduction to education. There is a strong commitment to encouraging learning through a good balance of child-initiated activities and those directed by staff. As a result, children of all abilities and backgrounds make satisfactory progress overall with about a fifth making good progress. The effectiveness of provision is rapidly improving.

Senior leaders make good use of data gleaned from assessment to track children's performance, inform forward planning and enable the governing body to hold the nursery to account. This has resulted in a steady rise in attainment to a point where, when children move on to Reception, they are broadly in line with what is expected at this age across all of the six required areas of learning. There is no longer evidence of underachievement. Further developing children's awareness of links between sounds and letters to support reading and writing particularly, but not exclusively for boys, and providing more opportunities for children to begin problem solving with simple calculations, are priorities for the future.

Teaching has been improved to satisfactory overall and often better. There is a strong trend of improvement. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated. Support for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good, enabling children with extreme communication weaknesses to make the same overall progress as the remainder of the nursery. Children are well behaved and through their enthusiasm show that they enjoy nursery school.

Self-evaluation is honest, accurate and productive, and consistently leads to improvement. Partnerships with outside agencies, parents and carers have been improved, and effectively support children's learning. This track record, with well-established systems and procedures for monitoring and evaluating, together with stability in staffing, is indicative of the nursery's good capacity to sustain further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment in communication, language and literacy skills by:
 - providing more opportunities for children, most notably the boys, to develop their awareness of letters and sounds, and build on this to

- promote early reading and writing skills.
- Improve children's ability to problem solve with numbers and make simple calculations by:
 - ensuring children are regularly involved in activities which promote simple addition and subtraction
 - developing children's knowledge and use of simple mathematical vocabulary
 - raising the profile of problem solving, reasoning and numeracy in classroom activities and displays.

Up to 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

3

Children of all abilities, backgrounds and experience achieve at least satisfactorily. Starting points in communication, language and literacy are lower than most other aspects and, as a result, outcomes, despite being broadly as expected nationally, are less marked. Boys for example are less inclined towards reading and mark-making activities, and this restricts their progress. This is an area already identified by the school as in need of further attention. Nevertheless, children are emerging as readers and writers. Any attempts to make meaningful marks on paper are encouraged and children enjoy matching letters to sounds when following big book stories and joining in rhymes and songs. Sorting by shape, size and colour enhances basic mathematical skills and most children count to five and some beyond. However, progress is slower in simple calculations and appreciating concepts, such as 'more than' or 'less than'. Such skills are frequently inhibited by weaknesses in how children speak and can explain what they are doing.

Children are satisfactorily prepared for the primary school in terms of their attainment, but there are strengths in the way they adapt to routines and follow instructions. Tidy-up time is a good example of children responding well to expectations that they take responsibility and show initiative.

Relationships are good. Children know they can trust staff and are prepared to follow instructions as well as show the beginnings of independence by making choices. They behave well, notwithstanding times when frustrations, which are the result of lack of communication skills, very occasionally lead to outbursts. These are dealt with swiftly and sensitively, and children are very soon back on task and responding positively. For their age, children have a good and growing awareness of how to stay safe and keep healthy. They showed real interest in being shown how to clean their teeth and are beginning automatically to wash hands after toileting and before eating. More articulate children are able to talk about the need to eat fruit and vegetables and drink milk.

Progress in personal, social and emotional development is good. It is a strength of the nursery, with children readily taking turns and showing consideration for others, for example when riding trikes and scooters or waiting for the swings. Sharing toys and materials is commonplace and children show by their attitudes, and in their

cooperation, that they are fast learning the need to get on with others as part of a community. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall, enhanced by opportunities to take part in creative activities, for example very precise, colourful leaf and hand printing. They experience festivals, such as Easter, Christmas and Divali. Listening to stories from other countries and cultures, particularly those known to children new to the nursery from abroad, is a positive feature.

These are the grades for children’s outcomes

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Children’s achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Children’s attainment ¹	3
The quality of children’s learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which children feel safe	2
Children’s behaviour	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Children’s attendance ¹	3
The extent of children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is rapidly being improved through accurate monitoring and programmes of professional development. It has moved from inadequate to consistently at least satisfactory on the basis of good planning and a clear understanding of what constitutes effective Early Years Foundation Stage learning. Senior managers, the teacher and nursery workers make a good team and children benefit as a result. Strengths in teaching include effective target setting, detailed recording, accurate assessment and analysis of children’s performance. There is daily adjustment to planning and provision to drive up achievement. In an excellent session, the teacher skilfully prompted children to explore their lips, tongues and teeth, making particularly good progress in self-awareness as well as in keeping healthy. It was much fun and good preparation for work still to come on how the shape of the mouth influences the way letters and sounds are produced.

Significant improvements since the last full inspection have resulted in a curriculum that is rooted in good practice, supported by effective planning and use of assessment. It is broad, balanced and interesting, and relevant to children’s various

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

needs. Particular attention is paid to those for whom English is not their first language so that they are fully included in all activities and develop their understanding of the language as well as local culture.

Children clearly enjoy making choices and learning through well-planned play activities inside and out. This enhances progress in all areas of learning and, above all, makes it fun to be in nursery. Children enter eagerly and are keen to show their parents and carers their learning journeys.

There is plenty in children’s personal development to indicate children are well cared for and supported. Parents and carers appreciate how well staff know their children and nurture them.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets children’s needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The nursery benefits from good leadership and management. This has been developed over time as a consequence of the federation with the primary school, for example sharing expertise and monitoring opportunities, and the stability achieved from wise appointments. Senior leaders and the governing body continue to be well supported by the local authority, who are committed to the nursery as a much-needed community resource. The new governing body is very supportive and already makes a satisfactory contribution to evaluation and school development planning.

Throughout, there is clear ambition translated into strategic planning and a continual drive to raise attainment and make sure children do not underachieve. This is proving successful, supported by well-established use of assessment, accurate self-evaluation and the participation and commitment of all staff. Together, staff and the governing body have overcome the weaknesses which resulted in special measures. They have made the most of external support and guidance in meaningful monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning without forgetting the importance of the child as a person. Thorough planning, based securely on Early Years Foundation Stage good practice, ensures that children have equality of opportunity and that there is no discrimination. Gaps between the performance of groups of children, for example in terms of gender, background and ability, are increasingly being closed as a consequence of effective use of assessment.

Safeguarding procedures are robust and effective in keeping children and staff safe without inhibiting learning. Daily risk assessments ensure that children are well cared

for.

The nursery’s contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. Children show by their cooperation that they are aware of the nursery as a community that they play a part in. They are satisfactorily introduced to customs, faiths and lifestyles of different countries, for example when children new to the United Kingdom join Chestnut.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers spoken to at the start and end of the school day were very supportive of the nursery. They appreciate that changes made have been for the better. They are convinced that the caring nature of the centre has been preserved and built upon. They report that their children are happy and safe, and that they make good progress in learning towards being independent and starting to learn to read and write. These positive views mirror those collected from parents and carers by the nursery in a questionnaire earlier this term.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its children’s needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its children well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its children.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its children. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a child in their learning and development.
Attainment:	in other phases of school, for example primary schools, attainment is the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. However, there is no national average for three- and four-year-olds. Therefore, in inspections of nursery schools, inspectors take account of expectations in the age-related bands of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well children acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of children.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which children are learning in nursery sessions and over longer periods of time.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



17 November 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Chestnut Nursery, Exeter EX2 6DJ

I expect someone will have to help you understand my letter, but I am sure they will tell you how pleased I am.

Thank you for your happy welcome when I visited your nursery. I shall be sad that this will be the last time I shall be coming, but I am pleased that Chestnut no longer needs what adults call 'special measures'. What this really means is that things are going well and that everything is better than when inspectors came along last year. The nursery now makes sure you get off to the right kind of start. This is a big improvement. Well done everyone!

Here are some of the highlights.

- You are well behaved and enjoy coming to nursery.
- Everyone looks after you well and helps you begin your growing up as sensible, healthy children.
- Teachers and their helpers do a good job and see that you make good progress.
- The nursery is well run. Staff make good use of what they know about how well you are doing to set targets so you can do even better and make sure your parents and carers are kept informed.

In order to be even better, staff and the governing body should concentrate on:

- helping you learn letters and sounds so you can do even better in starting to learn to read and write, especially the boys
- giving all of you more help in problem solving, reasoning and numeracy to learn how to add and take away.

I was really impressed by the way you share, take turns and play so well together. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mike Burghart
Lead inspector

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